

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

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Global business continuous to expand and successful business outcome depends on the appreciation and respect for regional, country and cultural differences – known as a cultural diversity. There are some cultural distinctions that should be taken into account when doing business abroad. They include differences in styles, attitudes towards punctuality, negotiating styles, gift-giving customs, greetings, significance of gesture, meanings of colors and numbers, and custom regarding titles. When you communicate with foreign partners it is very important to behave in accordance with the traditions of that country in which you have arrived. You should know international business etiquette and use it during your international travels and overseas assignments.

The purpose of my work is to compare business etiquette in different countries and to single out the most important rules of behavior that can influence the relationships with foreign partners.

So, what is etiquette? **Etiquette** is a code of behavior that delineates expectations for social behavior according to contemporary conventional norms within a society, social class, or group. Rules of etiquette include most aspects of social interaction in any society. Rules of etiquette are usually unwritten, but aspects of etiquette have been codified from time to time. Etiquette is dependent on culture: what is excellent etiquette in one society may shock another [1].

Etiquette can vary widely between different cultures and nations but there are common rules acceptable in many countries. These rules are applied to all people, regardless of age, sex, status or situation. There are certain aspects of general behavior: **be polite, be punctual, do not swear, shout, or lose your temper, remove your hat indoors, do not check your watch, and do not pick** nose, ears and toes [2].

The etiquette of business is the set of written and unwritten rules of conduct that make social interactions run more smoothly.

There are a few tips on doing business in different countries regarding the manner of meeting etiquette, business negotiation, dress etiquette, table manners and etc.

Whenever you meet anyone, new or familiar, you should offer a **greeting**. You should offer a handshake as appropriate and if outside, a nod of the head or tip of the hat to a lady. Men should always stand when greeting someone (women, actually, may remain seated). When female friends meet, they kiss on the cheek starting with the left and then alternating, for example three times in *Russia*, two times in *France*. In *Russia* when close male friends meet, they may pat each other on the back and hug. In *China* greetings are formal and the oldest person is always greeted first. Many Chinese will look towards the ground when greeting someone. Greetings in *Japan* are much ritualized. The traditional form of greeting is the bow. How far you bow depends upon your relationship to the other person as well as the situation. The deeper you bow, the more respect you show. Religion, education and social class all influence greetings in *India*. This is a hierarchical culture, so greet the eldest or most senior person first. Men may shake hands with other men and women may shake hands with other women; however there are seldom handshakes between men and women because of religious beliefs [3].

Business meetings are one arena in which poor etiquette can have negative effects. By improving your business meeting etiquette you automatically improve your chances of success. Comfort, trust, attentiveness and clear communication are examples of positive results of demonstrating good etiquette. Here are some business etiquette recommendations that are applicable to any formal meeting:

- Prepare well for the meeting. If you are using statistics, reports or any other information make sure it has been handed out at least three days prior to the meeting.
- Always remember to switch off a mobile phone.
- If there is an established seating pattern, accept it. If you are unsure, ask.
- When discussions are under way it is good business etiquette to allow more senior figures to contribute first.
- Never interrupt anyone even if you disagree strongly. Note what has been said and return to it later with the chair's permission.
- When speaking, be brief and ensure what you say is relevant.
- Always address the chair unless it is clear that others are not doing so.

Appointments are necessary and should be made as far in advance as possible and confirmed a day or two before the meeting. It is best to avoid scheduling meetings in *Islamic countries* between 11:15 a.m. and 3 p.m. since most companies close for prayers. The best time for a meeting in *India* is late morning or early afternoon. Punctuality is taken extremely seriously in *Germany* and *Great Britain*. *Brazilians* negotiate with people not companies. Do not change your negotiating team or you may have to start over from the beginning. The *Japanese* have difficulties with saying 'no', so you must be attentive to observe their non-verbal communication. Never refuse a request, no matter how difficult or non-profitable it may appear. Visual aids for *Chinese* company should only be done with black type on white background. Colors have special meanings and if you are not careful, your color choice could work against you. In many companies decisions are made slowly. Do not try to rush the process, as it would be interpreted as an insult. Do not use high-pressure tactics as they will work against you [3].

Table manners play an important part in making a favorable impression. They are visible signals of the state of our manners and therefore are essential to professional success. The point of etiquette rules is to make you feel comfortable – not uncomfortable [4]. If you are invited to *Chinese* or *Japanese* dinner you should learn to use chopsticks. Chopsticks should be returned to the chopstick rest after every few bites and when you drink or stop to speak. Place bones on the table or in a special bowl for that purpose.

Hold the rice bowl close to your mouth while eating. Do not be offended if a Chinese person makes slurping or belching sounds; it merely indicates that they are enjoying their food. Mixing other food with rice is usually not done. If you do not want anything more to drink, do not finish what is in your glass. If you leave a small amount of rice in your bowl, you will be given more. *In European countries* table manners are such the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating. If you have not finished eating, cross your knife and fork on your plate with the fork over the knife. Indicate you have finished eating by laying your knife and fork parallel across the right side of your plate. If invited to a meal at a restaurant, the person extending the invitation usually pays. Do not argue about the check; simply reciprocate at a later time. *In Islamic countries* food is generally served at a knee-high round table. A washing basin will be brought to the table before the meal is served. Hold your hands over the basin while water is poured over them. Dry your hands on the towel provided. Do not begin eating until the host blesses the food or begins to eat. Food is served from a communal bowl. Scoop the food with a piece of bread or the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand. Eat and drink only with the right hand. Do not wipe your hands on your napkin. The washing basin will be brought around the table again at the end of the meal. Expect to be urged to take more food off the communal plate [3].

The way you **dress** communicates to the people around you. It tells them what you think about yourself, whether you feel attractive, how much you respect your body and probably what kind of person you are [5]. In business men should wear conservative, dark colored business suits. Women should wear suits or conservative dresses. Do not wear ostentatious jewellery or accessories in *Germany*. The *French* and *Brazilian's* on the contrary like the finer things in life, so wear good quality accessories. *In Islamic countries* women must be careful to cover themselves appropriately. Skirts and dresses should cover the knee and sleeves should cover most of the arm. In *China* women should wear conservative business suits or dresses with a high neckline, flat shoes or shoes with very low heels. Bright colors should be avoided [3].

So, having compared the business etiquette in different countries we can make the conclusion that it is very important to know the cultural characteristics of the country in which you are doing business or going to rest. Otherwise it may be difficult to communicate and misunderstandings can occur. It is also important to know the etiquette of the country if you wish to distinguish yourself as someone worthy of respect, because what is often accepted in one country can cause a shock in another.

Literature references

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